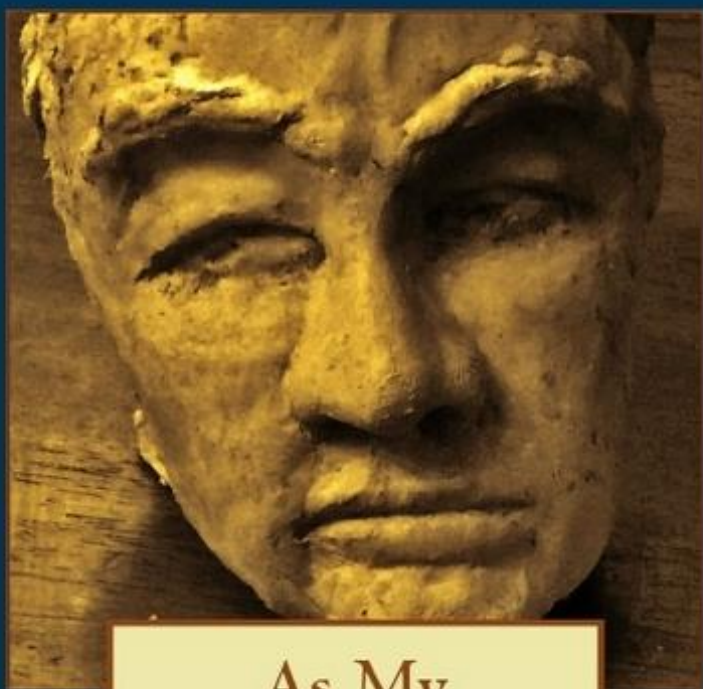




As My
Blindness Burns

- THREE LONG
POEMS

ALLISON
GRAYHURST

As My Blindness Burns-
three long poems

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

As My Blindness Burns – three long poems
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As My Blindness Burns

Without these things
of rainbow and insight
I stand, fragmented
by despair, fleeting as daylight,
composed of failed hopes
and held-back tears.

Young, like truth is
when first found,
are the swollen joys
of new understandings.
And secret still is
the unsculpted future
that rises unexpected without
resolution.

The muses of this universe hold faith
and doubt equally
in their impregnated beams,
and me with my hideous cowardice
that grows stronger with age, hides
the things that challenge
and direct me to an edge, ignoring the
simple surrender needed
to grow and to deeply be
someone.

This city sobs
when hearing its own wind die,
takes in its industrious hands
the sluggish and the bitter.

And the few who rebuke
this smog-breathing serpent
lean depleted in each other's arms,
hoping to embody something beyond
the world or melancholic pain.

And here, wanting, each slave is born, each
mistrust upheld like a perfected attitude.

People hold conviction without vision,
walking the subway floors, staring
out to empty highways.
Stale are the nutrients of each wished-on star.
Stale ambition bleating into
each small ear.

Lament now the corpses in caverns,
in parades and family restaurants.
Lament the eclipsed beauty of impulse,
the restraint of every compelling break-a-way.

For just one hope to tread behind
Jesus' sandal, freeze,
then crack all chains.

I would delight
in the struggles of individuals
conquering the downcast clouds
that hinder and fill a soul
with stagnant woe.

But like I am, sick with human
needs, political and ungenerous, I face
the storms and hide my pleas inside the
thunder.

Naked, lovers divulge
their infinite shades. Lovers
lean like dried up trees against
an autumn's ground, lean
for mercy and for each
affection denied.

But love they do
in the wintry airs
trying to overcome
personality, imbedded habits,
each other's foreign sphere.

I am pale, forgetful,
I lie awake all night taken down,
breathing the vaporous stench of
decay, in nightmares,
while kneeling before
the brightest flower.

I watch you thinning,
keeping
my anguish private,
for none will accept my five open
senses, the reasons for my withered will.

I cannot embrace my interior
with humble affection, but must
know the labyrinth's breathing tide;
mysteries renounced, complexities explained
by pensive reason.

Where I sit, seeking the inaccessible cure,
madness comes to kill through dissection,
definition and spiritual systems decreed.

In water I am numb,
drifting dazed through dark
androgynous waves.

I think of whispering to your waiting grave,
of netting grief and memory,
starving each of their sustenance
blind.

But then alone, in death, in life,
connection is our bread,
our higher air that beckons and repairs
the cracks that would kill on
tougher days.

How long to hold you in this sandpit sinking?
How long to watch your unwilling heart fade?

That I am through with annihilating snares
Through with the brutes of cold consuming despair

Through your life yielding to
sudden disease, through the closed door
that echoes strong sighs like screams
down corridors of love's
last stroke . . .

Longing for netherfields,
I want to run
in these subterranean, primal places, want
limbs of fire, eternally
red and dancing over the waking darkness.
I want to seal you

into the living Divine.

I am suspended, believing
the horror will not come, believing
death will not make
a skeleton out of you.

Dad (an eulogy)

*"My life was my peace, now,
in the moment of my release."*

Under here in the dark
deepest dream, the cold
loss, unbearable change,
I cry out blood. I have no
overcoat, no more protection.
It is now a different light I seek,
an alchemized marrow in my bones.
Do I sing, for death is peace,
and death is the edge that slices
the tongue in two, that drains the cup
of every drink? Home - I have lost
the essential tie. I have lived with a bond
so beautiful, now broken by fate and the blue-turning
cheek. How will I know my own grief,
the shattering that eclipses all but faith?

In the newspaper turning, I smell
your hairspray, I hear your boisterous voice.
I clasp in my hands the raw fire of nevermore.
Stand close to my mirror,
and help me breathe in and out,
help me take into my own
your generous heart.

I knelt before his photograph
on the casket and we talked
of gratitude and goodbyes. I saw
compassion's light, there, in
his dark tremendous eyes.
I felt the tearing off of seven layers of skin.
I held my hands together. Faith,
where is your shield? Your cradle
to rest my shattered spine? Each cell
is reformed by his departure. I am left
in the winter wind without clothing
or a protective tree.

Cut, the thin clouds
cut a pathway within
where loss is deep as God.
My fingers move like trains
back and forth. Ashes in an urn. Graveyard green
flavoured by tears.

I whisper to him when on the gravel road.
I see him beyond the fence, in the coming
December snows. I need him like before,
when hearing children talk, when waiting
for a terrible moment to pass. He formed a giving spirit,
rooted in integrity. Angels come and go,
hovering in my pocket books and on highways
I never cross. They touch the seagulls'
outgoing breath, they write his name
on Scarborough cliffs. I will not mourn
with unholy regrets, nor would I change
the tension in his nerves.

In closets, memories pile,
their scents and wooden colours
for years at rest in unchanged
shadowed hovels. I find myself
in unfamiliar rooms, emptied
of hope and the driven smile.
I find the walls pulsing, and the floor,
a bruised body I have cried for.
In years, this hot blood of loss
will thin and this tumour of unbuffered
pain will shrink and mend. In years, I will
see his picture and spend a Christmas under a pink sun.
November winds will wrap me in
a sweet and grateful slumber.

Hammered by a kaleidoscope of memories,
through the grand "if" and the willy-nilly
confines of love. Rifts in the pavement
I walk on today, still stunned by the enormous
and the unchangeable, still frightened of my thoughts
that go into the hard void, into the unfocused
stare and the image of him lying there,
no longer. Up & down craters beyond
this century's grasp, beyond the books
I've read and anguish before encountered.
He answers me in my head, wakes me at 2 am.
He protects me still, though his arms have bent
to the cold, unforgiving ash.

Appleseeds I'll never bury.
Evergreens lean towards the greying sky.
He is there like a shadow on my back, there
in the wheat-coloured grass.
He is over the city factories,
his face resides on graffiti walls.
And on telephone wires I see him sit
with the starlings, smell him in the scent
of evening rain. I hear his stories from
the beautiful lips of children. I think
I'll see him tomorrow again, know his
paternal warmth, the way his smile lifted
the corners of his mouth.
Time is drifting into the homes of strangers,
as death strides beside every dream
living, defiled or lost.
He surrounds me like the sounds of a streetcar
running, and I am running, struggling
to stop, lay down and to be reborn.

Ocean-cold and wooed by the tongues
of snakes. Miracles abound,
but still grief gnaws a pathway
through my torso. Trees are singing
of the flames I sleep in and the empty
days toss me to and fro, from heavy tears
to rage. How without him in the huge,
unpredictable world? How without his loud
and open gifts? Landscapes where centres break
and colours are no more. I touch the crocodile
tooth, the boiling point of all my bones.
So alone, coupled with the uncertain dark.

I miss his brown fiery eyes and how
he lived, pampering the hearts of others.
I miss him like I would my very skin, like the shell its yolk,
and the eyes, their vision - Where
is the cure? Where is the farewell
from this gruesome spell? The shock
still rivets in me. Crows spin through the clouds.
Death has been unleashed like the first feel of pain.

*Believe me, you have reached me. Believe me,
this enemy won't win. I will stand tall for you.
I will hold your hand until morning.*

Pale in the December sky,
the sun is but an insect's dream.
I leap from cabooses onto the icy tracks.
There are people in the playground,
happy that Christmas is near. There are
buildings with stained-glass windows,
reminding me of the aloneness we each are
bound to endure. Now my father, I wake to find
you hour upon hour at night. I talk to you
in half-conscious streams. In the afternoon,
I break down. Crows sit on my porch,
then follow me through the peopled-street
where I swear your shoes have travelled, once
in a bachelor's dream. And mother is all
sliced-up inside. Days and days we spend
looking at old photos, trying to dispel
her sorrow and devouring regrets.
My husband holds me like the best
of friends do. He carries me over

these desert fires. I want to tell you
how good was your influence, how soft
my aching eyes. I want to know you again
after I die, like you were in this life -
my strong, my steadfast guide.

Old factory fields in mid-December's light.
Vacant barns and rows of suburban homes.
You pushed me on the swing
and gave me courage to dive.
Sunsets in Spain and the sounds
of the typewriter at 4 am are now part
of my muscles and nerves - you are in me
like a fledgling in its nest or the drive
behind my every restless year. You knew
how the great dream fell, how rage can find
the form of forgiveness, and the bridge
between our two stubborn intensities.
You were my ally in the social sphere, my
guardian in the tower, my place of safety
and self-belief. You held me near
when the curtain opened, and my childhood
fastened to a ravenous storm.

I live in a room of brown-papered walls,
TV screens and empty teacups. I want
to give up like the hand that lets go
of the cliff or the orphaned boy
left on the streets alone. I'm trying
to keep my head steady, but no abstractions

relieve me, only pins and needles in my brain
and the intestinal twist that has found
its way within like a permanent companion.
People call, but only this empty dread
makes its bed in my heart.

I know it is over - the special way we needed
one another. I know I must take the road
to lead me on, past the dried flowers
and 1 pm breakdowns. Shakespeare at
the dinner table and omelettes in the
afternoons - I won't forget a single
kindness, the way you prayed
on that darkest day in my adolescent life.
Ceilings crack overhead. I knife
a million strangers. I curse the cars
going by and the cockroach on the kitchen
floor. There are no distractions from death.
There are no soothing things to do -
but to wait behind this cold and sealed door.

The cloven hoof of
this and that blood's pardon.
I feel the acorn hit,
the crossing of the Nile.
I feel like an Indian summer,
and all the sweat pouring into
the brass cup of mortal knowing.
Time, in time no love is broken,
not the pound pound pound of his
nature, not the be-all of his voice.
I will never hear that voice again,

not his loud centre ringing, his
male pride, gentle in the sun.
I will never carry his water again,
or tell him - I thank God
for you. For you and your quickened
energy, for the artery of your moral
gestures that gave with 'yes & no',
with 'wrong & right', the seed
of my shelter and the over-fair justice
I believed in all my childhood life.
I thank God for your walking sound,
how the room rebounded with your
surely presence, and the smile on
your eccentric face, there, when we talked
of a grandchild. I thank God for the breathing space
you gave, and the will to live out my tale.
I thank God for the hemisphere you made
and the beautiful passions you instilled
in my heart. I thank God for you -
my weight, the reason I write
my song.

If today the closed eye
takes me to where I've never
been before, if I meet my father
in the mirror or in a five & dime store,
would this pressure drain like the letting
of blood, would these horror-stricken
days mean nothing now but a bitter
tossed-away cup? If he moved through
a dream saying - Do not be afraid.
Do not let your mind fracture or your lips

turn blue - would I know him like
last month or meet him with raw wonder, anew?
The rings around my fingers.
The friends I cannot keep.

A month crushed
in the vortex of a python's circle.
Stale breath filling my atmosphere,
and hope is but soft warm sand
beneath the feet, is a season that
never fades, is not what my hands
can trace. I long for mornings
all to myself, to hear his voice
once more on the phone. But rocking chairs
and crossword puzzles rest vacant as
2 am streets. And birthday cakes are past
like an old person's dreams. He returns
again at night, alive for one more week.
Rain pours onto my teeth and
nutshells are gathered by the winter's
black and brindle squirrels.

With grace I may be replenished.
This dull anguish may be replaced
with starlight in my belly. Or with the
million winds of God's miraculous justice,
I may return to a little one the goodness
he gave, be offered the chance to feel
the kick, to know no stronger responsibility.
The same as he (with his stoic suffering

and gregarious generosity) plucked the weeds
from my journey's path and made me see
with moral clarity the fault of all but love -
so maybe I can be for one what he was for me.
Maybe soon my turn will come.

Before I knew my own face
in the reflection, I saw
sparrows rolling in the sand
and wished my heart open as the underpass
cars travel through. Before I knew of death
and its yellow-green smile. I offered
caramel-coated apples and chocolate bars
to placate it. But now I stand
beside its smelly aftermath. I feel
its wrenching voice fill my solitude,
and all the mad children of this and
other worlds echo their hell beneath
my many scarves and sweaters, touching
me nude with their growing black hole.
And soon I am just darkness with no size,
no boundaries or vision of outside. Soon
I am embittered by friendships I thought
I had, and mountains of rage churn like
spoilt food in my belly. I am sad too, like
the willow tree in my Montreal backyard.
Sad like my father when his mother died,
and his orphan cry lied sealed inside
like a voiceless fear. Because now he

is gone and things I often waited for
will never pass. No "Owl & The Pussycat"
for my children's ears, no more pride in
his sideways smile, or trips to India
or English moors. He will never know
my children's names.

Pigeons flock through the fog,
high above the park benches and lamp posts.
Guilt has no shore, but is an endless
sea where jellyfish and stingrays
make their nests and the dolphin
is no more. Our talks by the fireside
will never be again, or his drifting
to sleep on the couch in the winter's
after-midnight air. On Christmas eve,
all my memories are soaked into
the tree's red and blue lights. And Grandma
is gone, as well as the dog beside me.
But worst is the emptiness of his vanishing,
is the click click inside my throat
and the razor-burn on my knees. Kneel and pray,
for life is nothing but this and that thing done,
is the touching of two hearts
and the softening of brittle ways, is to keep
the soul's challenge forefront, then to sing
around the merry table of relatives and friends,
as if immune to bitter unbelief and fear
that drives the nail inward. He is
on the windowsill looking in,
reminding me that long ago

our once colliding spirits
made the greatest of amends.

Waves of snow outside the window,
moving like pure isolation, cleansing all
with its cold fury. Last night
I hugged him in a short farewell in my head,
in the blue fog of a dream. And waking
I found peace in January calling. Outside
a city hawk circled, blessing me and mine
with its instinct so talon-strong and
close to God. Families I never knew
have opened my heart. Barnyards and lithe trees,
stretch toward the silver sun. I miss him
at the dinner table and when the wine is served,
when all the things of hopes and wonders
implode within. Into the scent of dried rose petals
death dives with mad glee. Water-towers
cut a hole through eternity. The wrinkled word
I cannot speak. The keepsakes (like hot wax
pouring onto my belly) cause a redness
that releases my broken-heart's moan. And hanging,
- my flesh, my guilt, my grief -
now and forever merged, undeniably atoned.

Walkways



Dual forming on slopes of darker minds.
Succulent nodes of effervescent whispers,
whispering Oh! Blood clots bending
in unison to sharp solstices.

Dig and reap tomorrow's regrets,
piled on like love you thought was comfortable.

Comfort is a guard you let loose,
let down and found judgments -
platters to be served and roasted upon.

Singing for sale. A number left to a key. Fickle
verdicts oscillating between indifference and approval.
Release and acceptance - what else is there?
I am only unhappy when I want what isn't.

Platypus cans of tonic - drink down, flushing

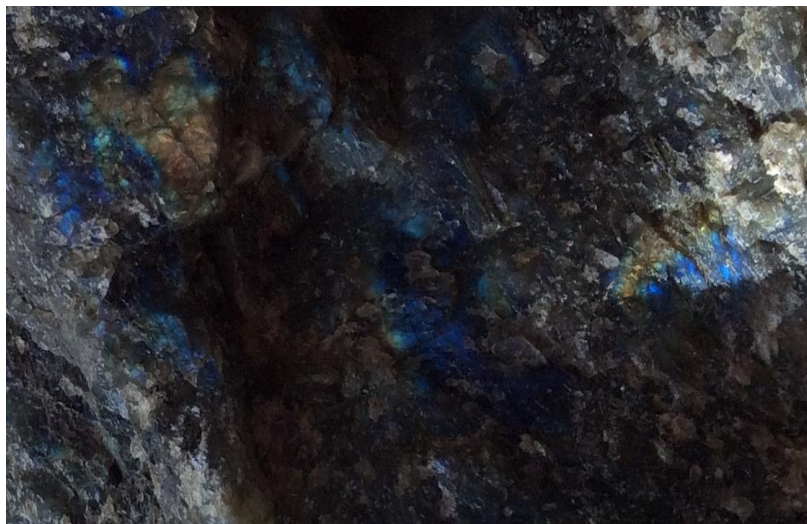
through organs. I see orange. Orange buses,
orange lines of direction on the road, in homes
where anger is held at stillpoint. One point
on a curve. I have lost my feathers,
all means of flight. There is nothing left
but hunger for the skyspace, outerspace, space
where I once travelled through meteor fields,
ballooning over planets' edges like a seamstress,
owning it all before I got grounded, committed
to personal love and the necessity of graves.

Why did I come here? To cry for my loved ones,
hold vigil for the slaughtered pigs?
Centuries that just were, lingering, licking
on waves of vastness, licking dark matter like a candy cane.
Not a soul, but the planets vibrating their orchestra - deep,
varying at intervals, then again, and never changing.
God, what am I doing in the sunlight - on the sidewalks,
making room for children on bicycles?
Putting pressure on my shoulders so I cannot sleep,
cannot appease this malcontent.
Why did I leave - to connect with misplaced animals?
Babies only born? Looking for union when before
I thought myself whole?

Material made from the moon. I understand
the beauty of caves, the great sea turtle's solitary plight...
but more and more - I never wanted more than you
again inside of me - infinity in corporeal form.

God separates to know Itself. God is only what we give,
awakening as we do to warmth and kindness - choices
under the wrap of gravity and yet, somehow,
lifted into altruism.

....



Smudges, under siege, patches of calcified tissue
and the swamp I enter in - fuming with failed love -
connections broken under the Buddha fire. Detachment
will not save me - nailed to the pavement stone, looking at birds.

Summer where have you gone? Smells rise to meet me,
and the air is still humid, pressing on my cortex,
corrupting my ability to choose joy.
Grasshoppers hopping. Will my heart be broken?
Again, again, squeezing, squished
fermenting at the sides, foaming and fizzling, burning sage, but
it is not good enough, not enough to teach me the strokes
or how to steady the raging chaos gestating large
in the pocket of my throat. Continents on fire,
inside organs necessary
to function - why the children? Why not me?

Livingroom-light-globe like a crystal ball,
opaque but powerful enough to predict possibilities.
I was never here before, never heard the angry rodents
vocalize, never slept with aching joints, dreams

of running low and ferns and moss
covering Zen-garden displays.
What else are we going to do here, but procreate, create,
dissipate and die? Van doors left open.
Lawn chairs on the road for pickup.
The windmill, the tilting tops of trees, heavy
with clusters of fresh pinecones.
I am an orange peel, orange, peeled, drying
next to the sewer grate.
I am limp with the weight, the burden of random happenings.
Always I love you and always, I am breathing.
Take me into the arms of your protection.
I don't want another day.
Mass of thick porous grey hovering, no space for hope.
Why the children? Couldn't you spare just them and all
the up-for slaughter animals?
I am done with this place, the tripping curb,
callous indifference - the rippling consequences
of blind destruction.

....



Piercing, lingering, chiming out a hymn, lullaby on a chain.
Remorse to wade in like a sea-salt bath, absorbing
the past into the present cellular flow.
Mounds of construction sand, building and restoring roots
without life, chopped down at surface level.
Ideologies fuel, then turned to cinder by anger -
justified violence that violates the laws of love.

Skittering up stairs, the last time I held a leaf I held
your focused form, unable to stay the distance,
but stayed nonetheless near rudimentary desires.

I am cut like a lawn, smooth as carpet. See me now,
skateboarding, jettisoning over humps and bridges.
The wind - position me inside your storm. The last time,
strength enlisted an empty street - such vines
and beautiful stones!

Mercy in a crack, a masterpiece of twin creation,
outside art galleries - living wood, sleeping shapes,
inviting holes... holy as sex, sweet hands entwined.

Release into me as I release into you,
in mutual receptivity, clear direction, directing energy.
Dew drops evaporating, shining.
Our masthead - brittle, breaking. Even so,
how we are combined! Such glow.
It is glorious to know you like this
and not be afraid.

....



Laid low, laid out like soulmates never meant to meet
in this life, in the spectrum of folly and limitation.

A painting layered, re-mastered, re-mused and then,
burned by neglect.

Miniature moment of perfection, condensed
to hold a legacy in swirling matter, hard and glittering.

Fractures as long as a walkway
stretching the borders of a great body of water.

Stringing thoughts like a child's dream. I know,
but I've learned not to take synchronicity so seriously,
learned there is only choice, and chance caved into,
selected to stand as fate - the end result, resulting
in a theory of complexities and open systems.

Stuck in the ground, protruding stilted like a statue.
Tell me it is true, that nothing pure is subjected to disease.
Crickets in the late morning.
When I am fixated, it is fantasy, false as poison in soup.

When I am lucid, liquid budding, my fingers are flames,
and all that they contact pulse with their heat.

Various clouds like currents perpetually pumping -
financial lack, and I, myself, curled up on the bottom stair.
Beds I defend, determined to lay in, over and over
hurting for considered crimes. Erasing perimeters, I clutch
at fraudulent mercies, securities of working furnaces
and washed hair. How to love damaged flesh, radiate love
for what is broken, far beyond romanticism, dangerous
as a cockroach and forever mutating -
translucent shells and pores - radioactive
and growing more grotesque under slabs of rotten wood?
Love, I do not understand you as I am older
and keeping up the climb. Medications and
broken down dishwashers.
Debt like ghosts that stick to my aura,
smothering out the colour -
Oh weedy garden! Sparrow on my roof, talk to me for a while.
How can I love, middle-aged, half over, clear
of a younger person's hope and indecision?
Pointing at ecstasy (a snail on my forehead) pointing,
pointing, stung.

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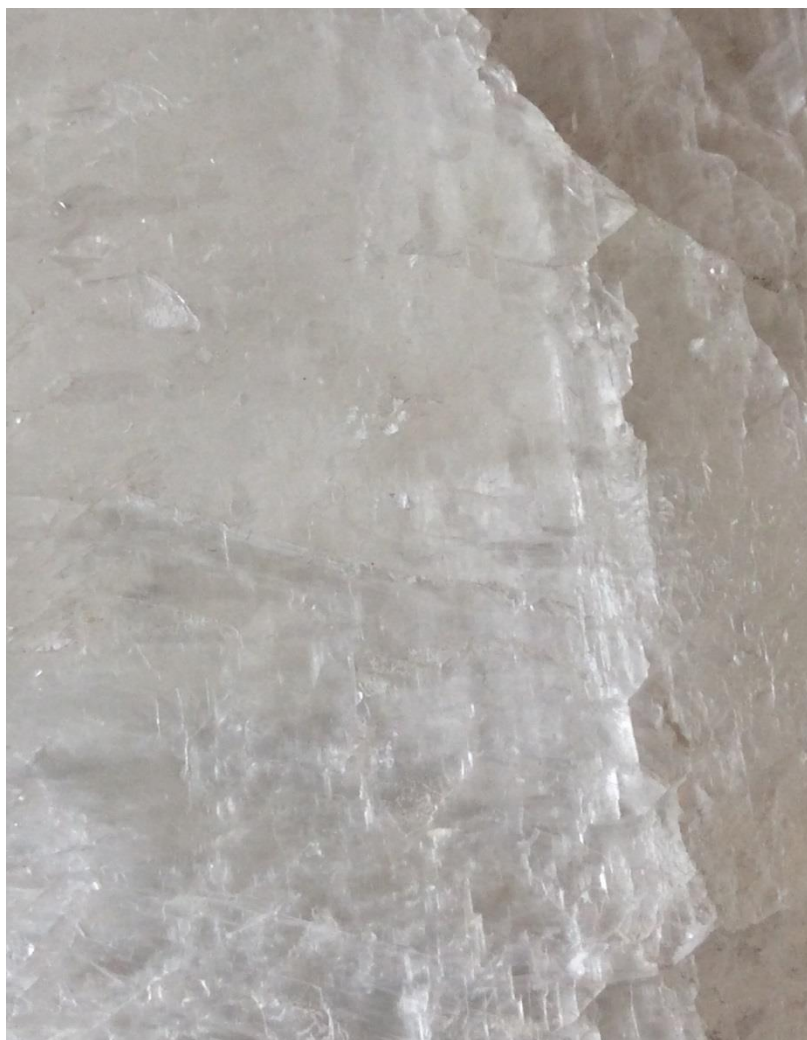
Light that drips down the turnpike, onto roads
and ways far away from any window.
Blocks to build shelters and shields. Flags on flimsy poles.
A neutral breeze busting cardoors and
personalized licence plates.
Paved over, I see a carcass dripping, a little yellow flower,
smaller than a thumbprint.
Rust-coloured shawl, poncho that holds
great sentimental significance holds
me to a memory, old now as a ten-year-old untended garden
or pavement cracks grown into fissures.

Forging, face-like an image. Worm in my sink.
Blood and cup of nutritional joy.
Hold out for the grace of good music
and drying on rocks, nude in the sun.
Quiet heat building up into renewal. Tattered ankle cuffs
and shrinking shadows, mid-stream. Up,
up we go, insistent on making an impression.
But walk lightly is all I'll ever learn, spoon-feeding the children.

**I bloom and I will die a woman, a butcher of frivolity
and the natural sequence of things.**

**The day is one day - enough, taken
into its rolling waters,
a dog's dream to join in, frolic in
some other species' symbolism.**

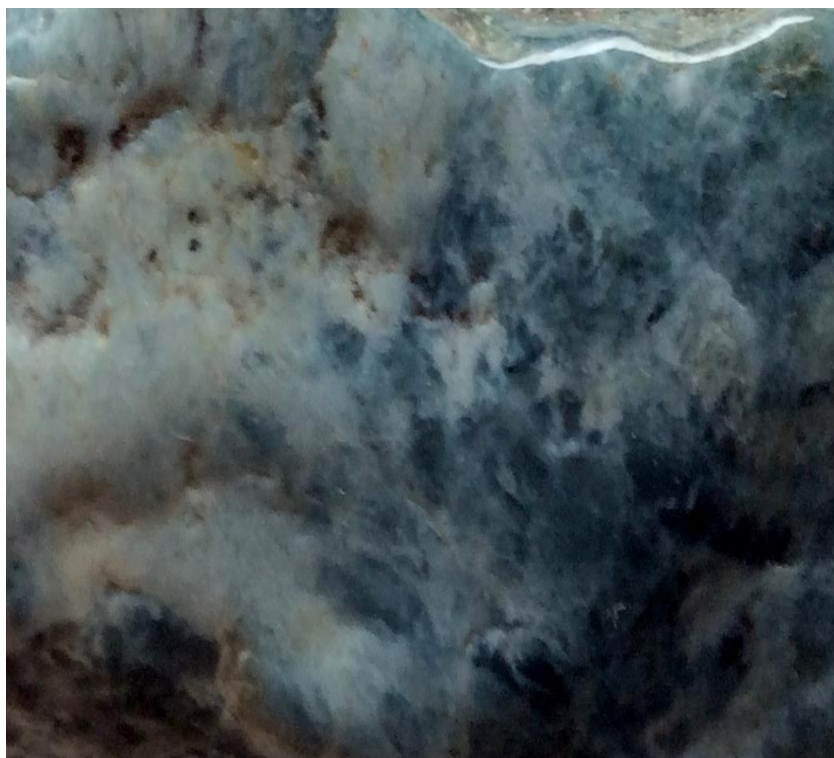
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**Come upon me like a feather-stick -
sectioning my abdomen like a fruit. Suddenly
toddlers are conversing and the grey cat
takes in the morning. Bundle of weeds,
bundle of flowers. An opening
under the burning canopy. Lifetimes spent
collecting synergy, male rhythms and fixed lines.**

God is coming down to hide in your loose-change-pocket.
I dreamt of owning your praise. Swinging from the rafters
in a game of hide-and-seek, I sought your breath,
hand of destined chores.
I played along inside the circle, inside a sack
I could hardly breathe out of. Languishing. A round bruise
forming on my left arm. Place me here. Crown me
or stake me on a tall spike. I am sand thrown mid-air.
No place to collect and land, not even a wave, a bucket,
the forelock of a horse. Not even
thinking in a straight continuation, but there, there, a pebble
between paw pads, then, a minor note locked
in perpetual repetition.

....



**Underguard. Crumbled tissue in my mouth.
A crazy way to run - hands in pockets.
Forward without, undeterred by reality.
Plywood I am keeping for emergencies,
for days when putting on the brakes just won't suffice.
Speeding, retreating, torsos twisting beautifully in anticipation.**

**I used to make mortar by hand, no machine to ease
my impossible labor - brick carrying and scaffolding climbing
and voices that ceased for a while in my head, visions
foiled by exhaustion - overused and folding.**

**Injuries are bypassed for much larger connections.
Double-winged, it is all that counts, to be counted**

like lightening, glazed like tile
and ancient bones kept as keep-sakes,
never a participant in trivial bickering or
watered-downed by petty grievances and
conditioned responses.

Sometimes I think of dying.

I think of the unread newspaper that stays folded,
wrapped in an elastic band.

I think of a broken bird making broken bird sounds,
too broken to be saved, treated by most
as a mild inconvenience
to be walked around and grimaced at.

Except by the man with the warm dark eyes, soft
furrowed brow, and a child who will not forget those mangled
wings or the hard lesson of helplessness, the inability to heal
or to be a vessel for a miracle.

It is hard to love me. I am hard, uncompromising
and never still. I am needing intimacy at every turn,
needing space to brood and build my solitary house.
I miss no one I've lost except the dead - a parent,
many animals that once shared my life. I am not easy, not
easygoing - bloodletting, bloodtesting, phone calls
avoided, coiled, almost mad and never understanding.

Sex and perfect reciprocation. Hands that know more
than words, keeping in the margins, layering synergy energy
into peaks and mounds, like mountains and fractal heartbeats,
fearless of falling, or of clouds. You and I,
it has to be our reward for not selling out, not
building cages of adult-overload, for constantly
clearing room for any divine equation no matter
how it threatens our already-precarious security.
We love our children, but not like others love.

We are less of this place, more reliant on grace
than our own worldly ingenuity to keep food
on the table, the bathroom fixed and cleaned.

Dear Jesus,

are you still mine, and I, yours? It is a lot to take in, decades and
mouldy walls. I am afraid of going off track,
of being dead and seeing there is no more I can do. That
it is done and inerasable. I am afraid of not feeling
the warmth of your hand when I walk, because
you are always holding my hand and I love you
with a personal love like Kierkegaard did -
his hunchback, a deformity that kept him pure.
And the loneliness.

Knowing you, but never any other.

I am not that alone, but I remember
space, lightyears of carved-out quiet. It enters me often
and I cannot get out of it. Breathing becomes separation,
a tool I must remind myself to use.

Remind me again, demand
my unwavering loyalty, trust, and all.

....



Paved paths, brisk
storm of senses, an old
opening, endless as a dug-in arrow -
head in the weeping jungle, the coolness
of autumn air brushing tombstones,
the thin necks of geese.
So much night in a single glass, body
and name together, replacing
existence with this inheritance and no other.
Rows of ships crowding the edge of the lake -
docked and bearing down for winter. The distance
grinds, gravel on my belly, cracked shells
in subterranean pages writing down dawns and victories
never experienced, only imagined.
Is it right to receive the bitter strawberry?

**Drink its flesh like juice and
kneel before reality's dictatorship?
Is it clarity? Or forgetting?**

...

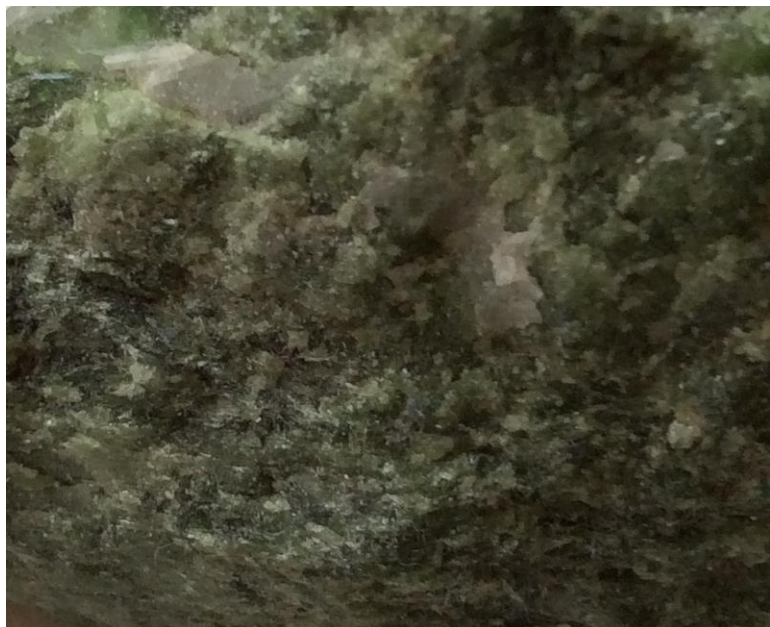


**Escaping on the brook's bank,
banking on nesting warm through
winter, but tears are horns that open
soft spaces, and autumn shifts heat and any hopes
for renewal. Love is fire -
from where it goes there are no shields to block
its scorching. Can we reach bottom in the rain?
Sing hosanna at the mountain's base?**

**Becoming is the stone, the house, the wave.
The lines between us all are solid, no longer lines but
one heavy blanket of vibrancy, creaking, splitting.**

I walk like I walk - barrel beatings,
borrowing crisp notions into my ears.
Stretched for a while to be compact again,
I hear an approaching intrusion, a high
wake, strong enough to travel on.
Stronger days of running through the weeded grass
where rabbits stand still at my passing
and insects move quickly into the shade.
Stranger days of watching a patio stone broken
from a storm - from a fallen tree that fell,
leaving me to find
meaning in such drastic weather.

....



Many years torn - a leaf, a paper towel,
half around the other side, locked
on the beach of my nadir - discipline
and a cold cruel courage, jammed into a groove.
Just the sunlight on my wall,
warming the wall, penetrating the heavy plaster.

I was born from a stem.
I fit on a chalkboard.
Over the cool half-formed moon
I hear an echo, smell the crisp lunar craters -
stagnant rocks, deep troughs to fuel
a million or more Earth dreams.
Scents of dead matter colliding,
of rough stone and endless rotation,
repetitive atmosphere
churning.

Behind a broken bark I hide my vanity,
rushing into quicksand, there I sink.

....



Ladle, ladder

**I lay open under the covers, under
cloaks of heartless yesterdays. My mind
is a string that wraps around the outerscope.
I eat wild flowers, never the lamb,
infused with avoidance, spectacular
acrobats of keeping on, caring little for the outcome.**

**Blundering displays of over-dramatizing
self-aggrandizement revealing the wound
of stunted spiritual development
and crippled attempts at affection.
Round and happy, unstructured indulgences
justified by plump purse strings.**

**Falterings. Mistaken formations.
A perfect line in nature existing.**

**All the days I felt alone are behind me,
gathering leaves, misty-eyed overlooking
my home: kaleidoscope windows coming into view.**

....



Once, gentle. Now, riled and nowhere but where
the stench of sewage is piled on the curb.
The gears of bitter disappointment snatching
you into a feral hold. Exotic tall weeds,
broken at the base.
Friendships are spoiled at the root, even love is
overshadowed by the decay.
Less obligation, less affection, less loyalty.
I must pretend we are healed, but the only healing
that happened was a cauterization of our severed bond.
There is anger but less hurt,
just the motions of getting through
undetected, and me by myself,
always alone -

separate happenings, entities, isolated
aspects merging, but never
whole. White car on the road.
Red car on the road. Silver then
blue. The only place absolute is
the place I left where faith was unnecessary
and all cells were one cell, not like here -
different functions - each dominated by its own survival.
No wonder love is weakened, can only achieve
a temporary claim on completion.
I accidentally crush the insect with my heel. It is consumed
by another of its kind, carried off
into the hive of practicality -
a gesture void of remorse or sentimentality.
In the end, there is nothing but wires and fences
and frames of flesh, cartilage and senses. Tomorrow
there will be talk and tea and eyes
locked in intense recognition.
Good for the moment
Good until there comes
the something we want
more of, less of, had enough of....

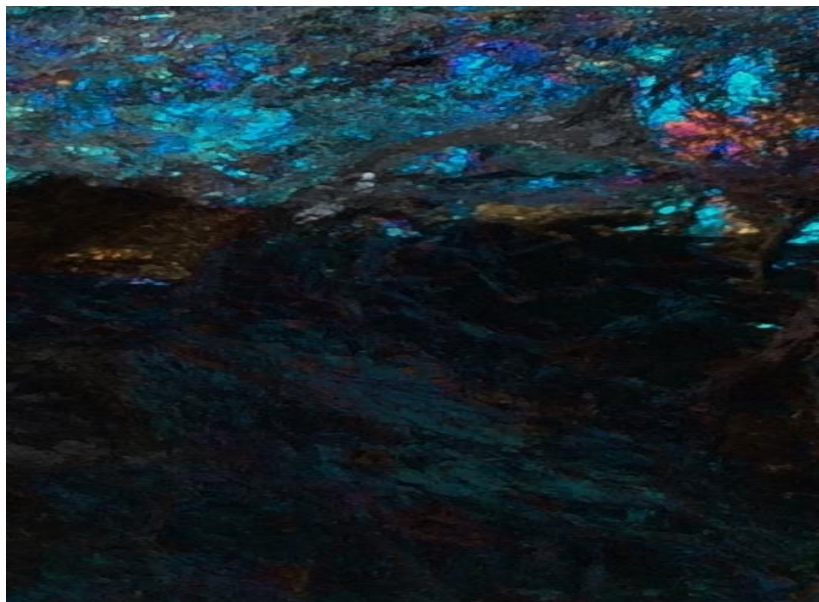
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For a while -
deathcamps, blue balls
baskin'robbins. Play tomorrow
the lute-song of today and remember
the ground-swell
pounding paradise into my brain, collapsing
from overload, reloading fodder
and flighty friendships I've lost use for.
Nothing counts, count on nothing but playfighting
over the bank, over the brim - rim - keeper
of the fixer-upper, of the still fire, fire still
as yellowed corpses. Mid-fall.
Fake it! Love! kindness, tenderness - be
polite, because very little is
anything you want to take with you.
Care-giver, carer of the children,
the laundry, pets and bank account.

It is all you are – rainstorm.
You must take this stone and swallow,
make peace with your burden, make love
with the swarming emptiness, stuck
in a gravitational pull,
planets, solar systems spinning around you
but you are heavy, must be,
unfazed by the pressured wind - stains
on the ground. Inside of you, chopped-up bits of fate
and crimes conceived before you
were born. Fake it, wallpaper it. Go on, try, smile

....



Fresh, potted
bright as an angel. Death is a whip
I put down. Ill health slumber,
but God is my mercy-king. Queen
of loving miracles. I will sing to
keep the right intention and grieve
minimally for what I cannot do.
Little red tree, no higher than
a toddler-child. Disco ball,
ball blue and gold,
twirl for me, let the grey dissipate into your
twinkling glow and all my blood into your veins,
little tree
plump and flourishing, readying for greater heights,
string-stream through me, weave me into your branches,
still firmly on the ground.

**Angels everywhere I need your temperance. I need
to know my children are protected by your grace,
wing-spread, and even
your cold white eyes.**

....



**Gaze, focus, hold.
Unconscious stream
of raw fluidity streaming,
rising over barriers, drowning them
with the pressure of an open door.**

Cracks of circumstantial disease,
creating pockmarks to expand destiny's choices,
fashioning gifts to give,
earned by bomb-droppings
and low flying plane-explosions.
Cobweb parties, graffiti
on the skin of your back,
made with a blade as small and smooth
as the tip of a hawk's feather.
Weaning off the burnt oak,
preening patches of grime.
Wake and rhyme, garden-keeper,
ambush your fear - it cannot be real!
Lungs run the same vibration as a flame.
It is hard, but not impossible. Gulp the sea
of senseless over-warming, pool the salt-taste
in your mouth, feel it
around your lip-rim, the sides of your cheeks. And there,
be safe, joining with the translucent swimmers, floaters
of prehistoric heritage.

....



**Principles of duty
overtaking sleep like a wave.
Heavy love rooted in isolation,
reflecting the depths of true giving.
A condition turns to disease, restrictions
bare down. What is ordinary becomes like
a cage. Children in the drifting storm, drifting
on condensed-traffic streets, how I love you.
How I would do everything I cannot do to ease
the grip of your elephant shackles. Mine was the angel's
autonomy, where nothing was miscellaneous and my bed
was a rich blackness that absorbed all time. Mine was loud**

without noise or distraction, just the buoyant sparkle flow
of paired-off stars and the countless debris of ongoing creation.
Mine is yours now, inside less-than-working-organs, kidneys
like puzzle pieces, seamed together by an amateur.
Where are you now, God-who-remembers, reminds me
of what I once was? My God and Jesus of the lilies,
why the children? Why this fluke,
this bizarre nightmare crawling, closer,
closer than when I had no body, no loves to look after?
And oh I am tired, worn as an old shoe that must keep
the broken glass at bay. Where are you my God, my Jesus?
I know you are here. I know something, but not enough
to deflate my bloating anxiety. It is grief all over again and I
hide myself in older hands, friendless,
unsupported, remembering
the wholeness in every flaw, in the universe's veined light
I once travelled on. Remembering that what is flawed sparkles
with a unique variation of beauty, rainbow fractions, infractions
that are blessings that seep and saturate sinews
and bones, galaxies
perpetual, renewable
where everything sings useful -
seemingly incongruent, yet in truth, masterfully
precise.

....



***All of these poems have been published and have appeared in:* The Muse – An
International Journal of Poetry; ArtVilla; Poetry Life & Times; Tower Journal**

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

**Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay;
www.allisongrayhurst.com**

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” Kyp Harness, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of Wigford Rememberies, Nightwood Editons; www.kypHarness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” Taylor Jane Green, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology* and *The Rise of Eros*.

“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst,” *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” Anna Mark, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” Cristina Deptula, editor of Synchronized Chaos.

"Toronto poet Allison Grayhurst's work is a collection of vivid imagery and gripping enjambment that puts the reader in a spiralling world of despair. By using language to express the human conflicts of inner turmoil and the way in which our



past burdens interact with the subconscious, the self and the world around us, Grayhurst sculpts poems that are revealing and confessional, as well as technically adept in their formatting and diction," David Eatock, *The Continuist*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," Anne Burke, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus, 2014.

"What a treasure Allison Grayhurst is. Her gift? To unfold for us life at this intensity of feeling and revelation. Who knew truth and beauty could be so intertwined and so passionate?" Taylor Jane Green.



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